



Mozambique

International Religious Freedom Report 2005

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The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report, and government policy continued to contribute to the generally free practice of religion; however, the Constitution bans religious denomination-based political parties as threats to national unity.

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights.

Section I. Religious Demography

The country has an area of 308,642 square miles, and its population is approximately 19.4 million. According to the most recent National Institute of Statistics survey, conducted in 1998, half of the population does not profess to practice a religion or creed; however, scholars at local universities assert that virtually all of these persons recognize or practice some form of traditional indigenous religion. Of the approximately 8 million persons who profess a recognized religion, 24 percent are Roman Catholic, 22 percent are Protestant, and 20 percent are Muslim. Many Muslim clerics disagree with this statistic, claiming that Islam is the country's majority religion. Religious communities are dispersed throughout the country. The northern provinces are most strongly Muslim, particularly along the coastal strip, but some areas of the northern interior are strongly Protestant or Catholic. Catholics and Protestants are more numerous in the southern and central regions, but significant Muslim minority populations can be found in these areas as well. Government sources note that evangelical Christians represent the fastest growing religious group, with the number of young adherents under the age of 35 increasing most rapidly. Generally, religious communities tend to draw members from across ethnic, political, economic, and racial lines.

There are 675 religious denominations and 121 religious organizations registered with the Department of Religious Affairs of the Ministry of Justice. In the period covered by this report, 57 denominations and 14 religious organizations were registered. Major Christian denominations include Roman Catholic, Anglican, Greek Orthodox, Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, Congregational, Seventh-day Adventist, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), Nazarene, and Jehovah's Witnesses, as well as many other evangelical, apostolic, and pentecostal churches. African independent churches are growing in popularity, and nearly all of the several hundred denominations registered in recent years are small, independent Protestant, and some Catholic, churches that have split from mainstream denominations. These churches more directly fuse African traditional beliefs and practices within a Christian framework.

Only one Muslim denomination is registered, but many Muslim religious organizations are registered, such as the Islamic Council. Most of the Muslim community is Sunni, with a small but significant Shi'a minority, nearly all of whom are of South Asian origin. The distinction between Sunni and Shi'a is not particularly important for many local Muslims, and Muslims are much more likely to identify themselves by the local religious leader they follow, rather than as Sunni or Shi'a.

Jewish, Hindu, and Baha'i groups are registered and constitute a small percentage of the population.

The country's leading mosques and churches have gradually eliminated many traditional practices from their places of worship, instituting practices that reflect a stricter interpretation of sacred texts. Nevertheless, most Christian and

Muslim adherents incorporate some traditional indigenous practices and rituals, and religious authorities have generally been permissive of such practices. For example, members of these faiths commonly travel to ancestors' graves to say special prayers for rain. Christians and Muslims continue to practice a ritual of preparation or inauguration at the time of important events (for example, before a first job, a school examination, or a swearing-in) by offering prayers and spilling beverages on the ground to please ancestors. Some Christians and Muslims consult "curandeiros," traditional healers or spiritualists, some of whom themselves are nominal Christians or Muslims, in search of good luck, healing, and solutions to problems.

Dozens of foreign missionary groups operate freely. Most are Protestant evangelical groups, but Islamic and Catholic missionaries are strongly represented as well. Protestant missionary presence is strongest in the south, but missionary groups such as the Summer Institute of Languages Bible Translators are growing rapidly in the north. Muslim missionaries from South Africa have established Islamic schools, known as madrassas, in many cities and towns in the northern provinces and provide scholarships for students from the south to study in South Africa. South Asian Muslim groups have also developed a missionary presence in recent years.

Section II. Status of Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides that all citizens have the freedom to practice or not to practice a religion and gives religious denominations the right to pursue their religious aims freely, and the Government generally respects these rights in practice. The Government at all levels strives to protect this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. The Government does not favor a particular religion, nor is there a state or dominant religion.

The law requires religious institutions and missionary organizations to register with the Ministry of Justice, reveal their principal source of funding, and provide the names of at least 500 followers in good standing. No particular benefits or privileges are associated with the registration process, and there were no reports that the Government refused to register any religious group during the period covered by this report. The Christian Council reports that not all religious groups register, but unregistered groups worship unhindered by the Government.

There are no national holidays that are religious in nature, but the Government has a liberal leave policy to permit religious observance.

The Government routinely grants visas and residence permits to foreign missionaries. Like all foreign residents, missionaries face a somewhat burdensome process in obtaining legal residency; however, they generally conduct their activities without government interference.

The Constitution gives religious groups the right to acquire and own assets, and these institutions are allowed by law to own and operate schools, which are increasing in numbers. In 2003 and 2004, Islamic primary and secondary schools were established in the cities of Matola, Xai-Xai, Nampula, Nacala, and Pemba, many with financing from the African Muslim Agency or from prominent local Muslims, many of South Asian descent. A Sudanese organization has provided funding for the schools in Xai-Xai and Nampula. Several other schools are under construction or rehabilitation in other cities. Many Protestant organizations have also opened primary and secondary schools in recent years. On the university level, the Muslim community has financed the establishment of Mussa Bin Bique University in Nampula, which opened in 2002 and expanded in 2005. The Catholic University has educational facilities in Beira, Nampula, Cuamba, and Pemba. Religious instruction is a primary focus of the new primary and secondary schools, but the universities associated with religious denominations do not emphasize or even offer religious studies. In fact, many students at Catholic University branches are Muslim, particularly in Pemba. Religious instruction in public schools is strictly prohibited.

A conference of bishops, including Catholic and Anglican members, meets regularly and consults with the President of the Republic. Throughout the period covered by this report, these groups freely held seminars and produced Pastoral Letters. There has been increased engagement by religious leaders on issues such as HIV/AIDS and trafficking in persons. Activities and positions were reported in the press without restriction.

In August 2004, the Government enacted a new Family Law, which replaces the colonial-era Civic Code and brings the law into compliance with equality provisions of the Constitution. The new law raises the marriage age to 18 for both males and females, eliminates the husband's de facto status as head of the family, and legalizes civil, religious, and common law unions. The law does not legally recognize polygyny; however, women in polygamous marriages are granted full marital and inheritance rights.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Government policy and practice contributed to the generally free practice of religion; however, the law governing political parties specifically forbids religious parties from organizing and any party from sponsoring religious propaganda. The Independent Party of Mozambique (PIMO), a predominantly Muslim group without representation in Parliament, took positions based on Muslim religious principles, advocated its views on moral behavior, and criticized the government for corruption. The Government has tolerated PIMO's activities, and PIMO has been able to campaign in public without interference. In the December 2004 presidential and legislative elections, PIMO campaigned vigorously but attracted little support, gaining approximately 1 percent of the vote.

Most places of worship nationalized by the Government in 1975 have been returned to their respective religious organizations; however, the Catholic Church and certain Muslim communities claimed that some other properties, including schools, health centers, and residences, unjustly remain in state hands. The groups continued to request their return. The Directorate for Religious Affairs is mandated to address the issue of the restitution of church properties. Government sources stated that the majority of properties were returned, with a few cases still being examined on an individual basis, including two cases in Maputo that remained unresolved by the end of the period covered by this report. Return of the properties often is delayed due to construction of new facilities, particularly schools and health clinics. Provincial governments have the final responsibility for establishing a process for property restitution. The Papal Nunciature indicates that properties are generally returned in poor condition, due to lack of government resources.

The Islamic community has completed construction of a Grand Mosque in downtown Maputo and is rehabilitating the city's oldest mosque. The mosque was formally inaugurated in late 2003 and services are held there. The Hindu temple in Maputo, which was inaugurated in 2002, is the first official Hindu temple in the country in 80 years.

In June 2004, 14 American Protestant evangelical missionaries were expelled from the northern city of Montepuez; however, the reason for their expulsion was not religious, and they were able to re-establish missionary activities in other areas of the north.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

Abuses by Terrorist Organizations

There were no reported abuses targeted at specific religions by terrorist organizations during the period covered by this report.

Section III. Societal Attitudes

Relations among communities of different faiths generally are amicable, especially at the grassroots level. No religiously inspired altercations between members of different faiths were reported during this period. Within the Islamic community, the black and Indian communities tend to remain separate, with each group generally attending different mosques and schools. While relations between blacks and second-generation Indians are generally good, cultural conflict between black communities and recent South Asian immigrants has led to tensions and some isolated criminal incidents.

The 7-year-old Inter-Religious Forum, an organization for social and disaster relief composed of members of the Christian Council of Mozambique, the Greek Orthodox Church, and the Muslim, Baha'i, and Jewish communities, is an example of interfaith cooperation. The goal of the forum is to offer collective assistance to the needy, regardless of creed. They officially established themselves as an organization in 2002, after at least a year of relative inactivity. During the period covered by this report, the forum conducted limited campaigns to promote HIV/AIDS prevention.

The Catholic Church continues to encourage the evolution of the country's political system.

Two prominent Christian figures, Reverend Jamisse Taimo and Reverend Arao Litsure, have chaired the last three National Elections Commissions, in 1999, 2003, and 2004. In 2004, religious leaders also served as chairmen of provincial election commissions in many areas. While President Guebuza is Presbyterian, most prominent figures in the government are Catholic; only two members of President Guebuza's cabinet are Muslim. However, all major religions and denominations are strongly represented in the National Assembly and in various government ministries.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights. U.S. Government actions in support of religious freedom have involved a variety of presentations on human rights matters to the Government. The Ambassador and Embassy officials also held several meetings with representatives of faith-based nongovernmental organizations, Catholic bishops, the Papal Nunciature, and numerous American missionaries.

In November 2004, at the close of Ramadan, the Ambassador hosted an Iftar at her residence, which nine prominent local Muslim leaders attended. One of the clerics praised the Embassy for helping bridge the divide between the local American and Muslim communities.

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[International Religious Freedom Report Home Page](#)